

Governing Body: MARION COUNTY COMMUNITY AND PROVIDER SERVICES (CAPS)	Function: INTEGRATED DELIVERY SYSTEM (IDS) HANDBOOK	
Subject: Peer-to-Peer Services	Prepared By: CAPS	Original Date: 10/01/2007 Revised Date:

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Peer support services are developed by and for peers and are designed to be an adjunct to traditional mental health services. Peer support services are based on the concept that individuals who have experienced similar problems, life situations, or crisis can effectively provide mutual support, information, and growth to others experiencing similar situations. Peer support can be applied to the individual or family system.

The value of peer support for individuals recovering from a mental illness is widely recognized in the recovery literature. The recent Interim "Report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health" (2003) emphasized peer support as a key component for a "recovery" approach for the treatment of individual's with a psychiatric disorder and recommended that peer support services be integrated into the continuum of community care.

Traditionally, individuals with a mental illness face many challenges such as unemployment, social isolation, difficulties with the educational system, difficulties with the judicial system, and exclusion from community participation. These individuals often face multiple life stressors with a minimum of resources and little in the way of family or community support. As a result, individuals with a mental health disorder often become our most isolated and disenfranchised members of society.

Research demonstrates that peer support services enhance the effectiveness of traditional mental health services, and supports the value of peer support for people who have mental health problems. Peer support offers hope and provides additional resources for individuals who have become socially isolated.

Peer to Peer support Services are effective on a number of levels as they:

- Provide needed support for individuals that are isolated.
- Enable individuals to recognize that they are not alone, that other people have had similar experiences and feelings.
- Offer effective role models, and a belief that recovery is possible.
- Offer opportunities for socialization, and a sense of belonging.
- Offer a safe place for self-disclosure and personal growth.
- Encourage personal responsibility and control over ones own treatment.
- Assist families in navigating the mental health system.

- Provide opportunities for individuals to gain a sense of their own competence through helping others.

Peers act as role models in a supportive process that helps to counter prejudice and offer hope, understanding and support. In other words, by sharing experiences and building trust, peers help each other move beyond their perceived limitation, old patterns and ways of thinking and move forward on their own path to recovery.

PROCESS AND/OR PROCEDURE:

Peer supports may be utilized as a way to enhance traditional services and provide a continuum of care. Peer support services are appropriate for most members regardless of their diagnosis or history.

Peer support services are often able to augment services and fill needed “gaps” in the service system by offering flexibility of hours and the ability to provide support in a variety of settings. For instance, peers may provide support during crisis, in outpatient and inpatient settings, or during treatment and transition planning. In addition, peers can provide support in the community by assisting individuals and families with navigating systems, encouraging participation in community activities and supporting individuals with just having fun.

There are a variety of peer based support programs in Marion County that have an impact on different areas of an individual’s life and provide specialized supports. Since the needs of members are often multiple and complex, it is better to offer an array of Peer support opportunities to best meet the members interest and needs. Within the IDS there are variety of models of peer support program such as, Recovery, Inc., Dual Diagnosis Anonymous (DDA), and The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Recovery Association Project (RAP), CCP, and Project ABLE, Inc.

It is important to note that choice is the single most important factor in determining whether or not someone is appropriate for a referral to a peer support program. These services are not appropriate or desired for everyone. If a Member chooses to participate only because they feel it serves as part of a treatment plan, it will undermine how much they will benefit and their potential to participate on their own in the future.

Recommendations for IDS Providers:

- Build collaborative relationships with peer support services within the IDS.
- Develop personal connections and gain familiarity with the variety of peer support programs available in Marion County.
- Evaluate how peer supports can aid and assist in the treatment of children and families.
- Explore Members interest such as hobbies and community activities and provide them with information on peer programs that best fit their particular interest.
- Educate Members on the value of peer support and the variety of peer services available.
- If a Member indicates interest in peer support, provide them with the program contact information and/or assist them with making contact with the desired program by offering to place the call or facilitate a meeting with a program representative.

- Invite representatives from Peer organizations within the IDS to give presentations on the value of peer support and to provide information on their services.

As we move along in this process, CAPS will be developing audit tools to assist us as a system in identifying resource, technical assistance and training needs. We expect these tools to evolve as we evolve in our understanding and practice.